

ABSTRACT

Apparatus for automatically building an electronic form for presentation to a user during a data capture process segregates the data capture intent behind the form from the presentation and execution of the form to a data capture user. In this way, the data capture process, including generation of the form and display of user input prompts, can be carried out on any computing platform independent of the system used to generate a data capture definition file that specifies the intent of the data capture requirements. The specification of data elements required during data capture, each having a type specification and a logical relationship relative to other data elements in a hierarchical structure are defined in a data capture definition file in a predetermined format. A data capture process executes the data capture definition file and automatically generates a plurality of visual displays for presentation to a user, each input screen comprising a plurality of user input areas corresponding to the data elements and physically positioned on the screen in a manner corresponding to the defined logical hierarchical structure.